



Morning Alert - Wednesday, August 23, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and Fuji TV gave top play to reports on three fires in Aichi Prefecture on Tuesday that were apparently caused by lightning. NTV and TBS led with reports on an incident in which three people fell ill after eating potato salad from a supermarket in Saitama Prefecture that was found to be infected with O-157 E.coli. The networks said four other people fell ill after eating E.coli-infected potato salad bought at another supermarket in the prefecture. TV Asahi gave top play to a report on Koryo High School catcher Shosei Nakamura who hit a tournament record sixth homerun in his team's victory in the semi-finals at Koshien on Tuesday.

Top stories in national dailies included the increasing number of national government employees who are taking assignments at other public entities in addition to their regular jobs (Asahi); the rising number of drug offenses in North Korea (Mainichi); a government request to banks to allow customers to use their maiden names in their accounts (Yomiuri); and talks between Toshiba and Western Digital on the sale of the memory unit ([Nikkei](#)).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. imposes sanctions on Chinese, Russian firms over North Korea

All papers ran front- or inside-page reports on the Treasury Department's announcement on Tuesday that it has imposed sanctions on ten entities and six individuals mainly from China and Russia for supporting North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. This is the largest number of entities and individuals ever sanctioned over North Korean by the U.S. government. The paper wrote that the Trump administration has been stepping up its pressure on Pyongyang and imposed sanctions on firms involved in the coal and oil trade and the dispatch of workers to foreign nations.

The paper also wrote that the USG has asked the GOJ to act in concert with it and Tokyo has agreed to impose similar sanctions. Treasury Secretary Mnuchin said in a statement: "Treasury will continue to increase pressure on North Korea by targeting those who support the advancement of nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and isolating them from the American financial system. It is unacceptable for individuals and companies in China, Russia, and elsewhere to enable North Korea to generate income used to develop weapons of mass destruction and destabilize the region."

Kono reveals views on foreign policy issues

All papers reported on their interview with Foreign Minister Kono on Tuesday, during which he described Japan's foreign policy challenges, including China, North Korea, South Korea, and Russia. Yomiuri quoted Kono as expressing readiness to keep in close communication with his foreign counterparts by saying that he held talks with Secretary of State Tillerson and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang on the sidelines of the ASEAN foreign ministerial meeting. Concerning North Korea, Kono stressed the importance of thorough implementation of UN sanctions by saying that it is important to closely monitor the movement of people, goods, and capital to close loopholes. With regard to Japan's relations with China and South Korea, the foreign minister stated that he will strive to improve ties with these nations through reciprocal visits between him and his Chinese and ROK counterparts. He added that Japan will continue to urge his South Korean counterpart to implement the bilateral comfort women agreement. Concerning Russia, Kono said that it is necessary for both Tokyo and Moscow to take a flexible approach to the Northern Territories issue and expressed a desire to visit Russia at an early date. Kono also expressed readiness to play a role in bringing peace to the Middle East by pointing out that Japan, both historically and in terms of religion, has taken a neutral position toward the region.

Ambassador Hagerty, Foreign Minister Kono hold first meeting

Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono invited Ambassador Hagerty to lunch at the MOFA Iikura Guest House on Tuesday. This was their first meeting since the Ambassador arrived in Japan on Aug. 17. The papers wrote that the two officials agreed to further strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance. Yomiuri quoted Kono as saying that he looks forward to working with the Ambassador, who has a good understanding of Japan. The paper quoted the Ambassador as saying in reply that he feels honored to serve in Japan, where he has lived and worked in the past. Sankei quoted the foreign minister as expressing hope to develop a relationship in which he can hold candid discussions with the Ambassador in order to further strengthen the bilateral alliance. The paper quoted the Ambassador as saying in reply that the U.S.-Japan relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world. NHK aired a similar report on Tuesday evening.

Japanese, Indian foreign ministers discuss bilateral, other issues

Nikkei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono held a teleconference with this Indian counterpart Swaraj on Tuesday and that the two officials agreed to hold a strategic dialogue at an early date. They also confirmed the need for cooperation in promoting reform of the UN Security Council. In view of Prime

Minister Abe's upcoming visit to India, the two foreign ministers agreed to promote India's introduction of a high-speed railway system using Japan's Shinkansen technology.

SECURITY

Bodies recovered inside damaged U.S. warship

All papers wrote that concerning the USS John S. McCain's collision with a tanker off Singapore on Monday, Adm. Scott Swift, the U.S. Pacific Fleet commander, told reporters on Tuesday in Singapore that divers recovered several bodies inside the destroyer and the Navy is investigating whether they are the bodies of the 10 missing crew members. Another body was recovered by the Malaysian navy. The admiral said that the Navy will conduct a thorough investigation into the collision. Noting that the collision occurred within two months of one involving another Navy destroyer, the Fitzgerald, off Japan that left seven U.S. sailors dead, and that there were two other accidents involving warships in the region this year, the admiral said that there have been too many accidents and that the Navy will find out whether there is a common cause at the root of these events.

Japan concerned about impact of accident on missile defense against North Korea

Nikkei wrote that in response to the collision involving the USS John S. McCain, the Japanese government is becoming increasingly concerned that it may affect the existing missile defense against North Korea because although the U.S. and Japan are working together on warning and surveillance missions, the U.S. Navy will likely be forced to reduce its operations because of the accident. MSDF Chief of Staff Murakawa told the press on Tuesday that he cannot completely deny a possible impact.